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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: RECENT ARRESTS SHOW PROGRESS ON
PREVENTING NUCLEAR SMUGGLING

REF: STATE 117568

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary and Comment: Joint cooperation between the USG and the Georgian government has improved Georgia's ability to prevent nuclear smuggling. One area in which the government of Georgia continues to improve is the investigation of nuclear smuggling cases and the prosecution of traffickers. The latest example, an October arrest and prosecution in Tbilisi of three Georgian radioactive materials traffickers, highlights this progress. Despite substantial advancement of its anti-nuclear smuggling capabilities, the government's nonproliferation regime still has considerable gaps. For example, it is not always able to respond to incidents where radiation is detected in a timely manner, due in large part to financial limitations. The government continues to rely heavily on U.S. and international assistance in strengthening Georgia's resources to prevent nuclear smuggling. End Summary and Comment.

SUCCESS STORY

12. (S/NF) The USG and the government of Georgia have a long history of close cooperation to secure radiological sources in Georgia and to improve Georgia's efforts to prevent nuclear smuggling. On October 16 and November 19, U.S. and Georgian delegations met in Tbilisi to review the joint action plan to improve Georgia's anti-nuclear smuggling capabilities, which was signed on February 2, 2007 (see refTel and septel). One area which was identified as a priority need in the joint action plan was maintaining Georgia's efforts to arrest and prosecute all identified nuclear smugglers. The Georgians have had considerable success in this area, as indicated by the October 13 arrest of three Georgian radioactive materials traffickers, who were later sentenced to imprisonment (see TD/314-076336-08). The traffickers were arrested in Tbilisi after a sting operation in which they attempted to sell cesium-137 to an informant. The traffickers initially attempted to market the material as uranium, but then acknowledged it was cesium, reportedly from Russia. A fourth member of the group is still being sought. Information regarding the arrests and prosecutions has not been released to the press, and reportedly not even to other government organizations, due to the sensitivity of the operation. The investigation is ongoing, and in fact, the associates of the traffickers are not even aware of their arrest.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

13. (S) The government struggles, however, to fully implement all of the requirements set in the joint action plan. Working level government officials attribute this primarily to financial restraints and a lack of high-level government support. One example is their inability to consistently

respond quickly to incidents of radiation detection. This is due both to Georgia's geography and the absence of a western field office of the Nuclear Radiation Security Service (NRSS), the agency responsible for responding to incidents involving radioactive sources. The only NRSS office is in Tbilisi. However, while the Georgian government still has much work to do to further develop its capabilities to prevent nuclear smuggling, the ability to successfully investigate and prosecute nuclear trafficking cases speaks volumes for its efforts thus far.

TEFFT